



STORM IN
HARVEST

And Other Poems

By
EDWARD STEESE

BRICK ROW BOOK
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AND OTHER POEMS

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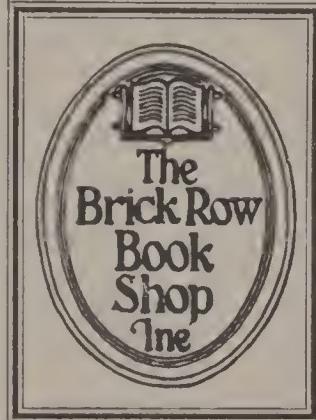
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EDMOND BYRNE HACKETT

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FOREWORD

In bringing this book before the public, I wish first to offer my deepest thanks to Schuyler B. Jackson, and to Professors Morris W. Croll and Gordon Hall Gerould for their helpful criticism and aid in selecting these poems for publication, as well as for the encouragement and inspiration they have given me during my years at Princeton. I wish also to thank the editors of the London Mercury and the Nassau Literary Magazine, and the members of the Tuesday Evening Club for permission to reprint many of these poems.

E. S.

C O N T E N T S .

I

- Storm in Harvest, 7
The Covered Well, 11
Dead Leaves, 13
Lines Written in Autumn, 15
After Tennis, 25
Mary, 27
The Spinster of Skinch Lane, 28
Evening, 30
Relief, 31
Tosca, Act III, 32
Winter, 33
March, 34
Necessity, 35
Fireside, 36
After Golf, 37
Symphony, 38
Norman Firs, 39

II

- A June Walk in Princeton, 43
Going to Eat, 50
Spring Night, 51
The Student Re-enters His Room, 52
The Student Looks From His Window, 53
Twenty-One, 54
Perspective, 55
Peace of Night, 57
Moonrise, 58
On Leaving a Room, 59
The Sea Lies East of Princeton, 60
Metronomes, 61
After Closing, 62

III

- To a Woman Who Has Gained Peace, 65
Sea Brume, 66
Ecstasy, 68
The Poet Calls His Love to the Mountains, 69
He Advises His Love, 70
Broken Chords, 71
He Closes His Heart, 72
He Finds Relief in Life, 74
He Appeals to Night, 75
He Seeks Other Lands, 76
He Finds Peace at Dawn, 77
Cold Stars, 78
The Storm, 79
The Locked Door, 80
The Crystal Ballroom, 81
To Lydia, 82
Two Sonnets, 83
On Seeing Some Inland Roses, 85
The Next Meeting, 86
He Finds Hope in the Cosmic Law, 87
The Last Train, 88

STORM IN HARVEST

To M. H. S. AND E. S. S.

I

LINES,

In Memory of Howard Crosby Butler.

We shall not hear his voice, nor touch his
hand,

See wisdom face to face, nor quiet mirth
Shall share with him, nor music, nor
things planned

Enjoy as if fulfilled. There is a dearth
Come to our lives, who knew him. He is
dead.

We cannot tell of him as should be told,
Nor reproduce his spirit. He is dead.

Sorrow our hearts doth hold.

Friends . . . those who knew him, all,
Lower the simple pall,
And bow the head.

He would not have us mourn, but gently
miss

His kindness; and if his soul had shone
To light our hearts with courage of the
dawn,

He would have gladly smiled. But now
that too has gone.

One hope of understanding, less;

One ray of simple gentleness;

One guiding hand with genius in its touch,
Has passed.

This man was such
In spirit, that he gave,
Now would he bend to save,
Himself for others.

Modest his name, but great
The love we bore him. Rather would he
be known
As friend than as the master.

Now abate
Your grief awhile, for this sweet life has
sown
In our remembering hearts, a constancy
Of hope and wisdom, and an eager breath
That shall not fail. Pay the earth's
obsequies;
His soul borne in our hearts shall not
know death.

(Princeton, September, 1922)

STORM IN HARVEST

All noon the burning sun blazed on the wheat,
And from the field vertical waves of heat Rose in the sultry air. The yellow grain Quivered with drought, the kernels cracked with pain,
While as the slow scythe cut, flashing the sky,
Soughing through the crisp straw, powder as dry
And fine as pollen mounted the air and hovered
Until the reapers' hands and necks were covered
With sweat and dust.

An old man paused, and said,
Struck by the white horizon and the red Glow of the sky, "A storm is brewing there
Beyond the west," and mumbled when the air
Thickened above them, threatening.

As he spoke,
From the hot hills a distant echo broke
The withering silence, a low mutter of thunder.
The reapers stopped their work, found shelter under

Clumps of huge trees, and cursed the
gathering storm.
Some said they had foreseen it from the
warm
Spell of dry weather that had passed, and
knew
With such long drought some storm would
surely brew.
They thought of the huge barn that soon
would be
Cover from wet; how they would gladly
see
Its gaping lofts filled with the golden
straw,
And on the bright morrow, the greedy
maw
Of the great thresher; then, the grain-bags
stacked
On the barn's floor, and the wide wheat-
bins packed.

The storm raced up behind the hills and
drew
Nearer with shattering strides. The front
clouds flew
Over the reapers' heads in a black
rush
To the white sky. Then wind ceased,
and a hush

Deep as the darkness brooded. The trees
 stood still,
And the earth panted. On the blackened
 hill
The barn stood empty, waiting. The
 thick sky
Grew strangely denser. Wheeling swifts
 swooped by.
The reapers waited, sickened. Each de-
 tail
Sunk on their parching eyes: the fields
 grown pale,
And flashing contrast, the viridian wood,
And the bright poppies dripping their red
 blood.

The reapers closed their eyes, but the old
 man
Could not relax, and waited still to scan
The clouds, the hill, the barn, the hay new-
 stacked.
He clapped his hand to his eyes.
 Lightning cracked,
Snapped through the air in sheets; the
 thunder reeled
Clapping and clacking over the red field.
The reapers woke, and cried out. Thun-
 der broke

Again and again. The hot breath of
smoke
Beat in their nostrils, and they waked to
find
The barn on fire, and the old reaper blind.
Brown smoke rolled out, black cinders
eddied round,
Winging the vacuous wind, and the
parched ground
Blistered under the scourge; the air turned
still
And hot, and the barn blazed on the far
hill.

Then, suddenly down pounded the rain,
And poured on man and barn and hill and
plain.

THE COVERED WELL

Now that the drab autumnal brown
Tinges the woods, and frost turns bare
Fields yellow, she has come back to town
After ten years, with gray in her hair.
She is alone this time, and knows
But dimly why she has come at all,
Or why as once she went, she goes.
Then it was Spring; now it is Fall.

Down the long road in the October light
She holds her not unlovely head
Quite high, smiles bravely at new sight
Of places known, and shows no dread.
Sultry the afternoon and warm;
White gloves grow gray upon her hand;
Dust powders her gown, and she
Is tired of carrying work she'd planned

To help her pass still hours here.
She will not use it now; she will go
Only to where she went that year.
Then, the train home. So, once below
The bend in the road, she hurries on
And comes to the little stone-rimmed
well;
It is covered now, but she has gone
And heaved at the lid. And where it
fell

She lets it lie, and looks deep, deep
In the ground. . . . And then she
turns away,
Moving more slowly. She hears the peep
Of myriad tree-toads in the gray
Long grass of the drying swamp nearby,
And stops, to think of the still June
day
She had looked in that well and tried to
cry,
And known that she would never pray.

Nor had she ever prayed, nor cried.
Something had closed upon her then.
It seemed that some small thing had died
She'd not for worlds let live again.
As the October twilight fades
She remembers the old beauty there
Of flowers and shrubs and trees and blades
Of grass, and the golden wash of air;

But now she hears late robins call,
The crickets chirp, and tree-toads blow;
She feels the quiet evening fall,
And thinks it must be time to go.
She has put her hand to her face, and found
It wet; but smiles, and holds her head
More lightly. As she walks, the ground
Seems more resilient to her tread.

DEAD LEAVES

Deep in brown autumn woods they met.
Each sadly saw the other sad.
Each smiled, and said the day was wet
And full of drowsy meaning. . . glad,
Perhaps, to see the other there,
Tho' stranger, in the still, damp lane. . .
He did not see that she was fair,
Nor cared if they might meet again.

Yet, to each other they bowed, and
thought
'Twould not be shameful if they walked
Together; find out what each sought
To gain. . . or lose. Low voiced, they
talked
A while, he in vague allegory. . .
Summer was gone; 'twas sad, he said. . .
Always, always, the old, old story. . .
He hated to think of things grown dead.

She said there was no death. The soul
Ever found comfort in what was past.
So these dead leavings caused no dole
In her. Their truth still lived. She cast
Downward her glance to the wet brown
leaves. . .

They spoke of fragrant spring to her.
He said, "Look at the umbering sheaves,
The wind-cast skies of lavender;

Colors of mourning; dead." "Not dead,
But sleeping. Feel their sleep. The
things

Strewn on the ground are words," she said,
"All vain, tho' once sweet utterings.
Once they have cheered; surely will please
Again, budding afresh. . . For I
Know them put forth from immortal
trees. . . ."
He shook his head, and smiled good-bye.

.

They met again with spring. He felt
Her fair and good. He saw her eyes.
The leaves burst green anew; tongue spelt
The old undying ecstasies.
She smiled. "The tree is strong. Your
words
Are weak. Pity, they'll soon be dead!
Strewing the ground, frail, trampled
shards. . . .
But oh, I'll come to you!" she said.

LINES WRITTEN IN AUTUMN

To M. H. S.

I

Now is the autumn, when new strength
inspires

To fresh creation, and a sudden joy
Of life wells in the heart. For sun is hard
Beating on ripened fields where corn new
stacked

Contrasts its light and shadow, and
pumpkins reddens

Near yellow sheaves and copses dark blue
grey

With sudden color on the edge, where
crows

Winging above the brush call harsh and
loud.

Now is the autumn; glad are the strong
hearts

That knock within us. Out to the fallow
fields

Summon yourself. There, let the beauty
burn

Into your heart, and as the mind receives,
Squeeze on your palette colors of the sky
Hills, brakes, and fields in the warm nat-
ural tones,

To cover your canvas with the light of
Earth.

II

When winter whitens on the fields, and
fires
In close shut rooms strive vainly with the
cold
That whirls through cracks and etches
on the panes
Figures and whorls of frost; when the wind
beats
Unmuffled at the door, and knocks and
rattles
At shutters, while snow sways down and
heaps the land;
When action ebbs, as the sere mind congeals,
Sinking to rest. . . Then dreams are of
long months
Of verdure and sun's warmth, vacation
gained
By drudgery to release the hidden springs
Of Being into life, when at the dawn
The heart leapt with the sun over the
fields,
And journeying forth with sketch box we
would go
Up country lanes among the meadows and
hills
To seek some sheltered spot where we
might work
Through the noon heat, and luck having
it so,

Imprison gleams of beauty; failing oft,
The creative spark snuffed out, there to
drink in
Treasure of summer in broad daisied
sweeps
Of meadow, or in hay-making under a sky
Where the heat raised white cloud-heads
in the blue
To hang like eiderdown, and without
motion.
Then came the days when the September
spell
Was woven on the land, and brought a sleep
As slept the imprisoned Princess in the
tower,
And all the scullery maids and pot-brush
boys,
Till the Prince came and waked them with
a kiss.
So autumn comes and shakes the ver-
durous wood,
With pinioned wind, and causes leaves to
fly
And scatter hither thither, that erewhile
Hung motionless in dream. The world
awakes
With touch of that keen kiss, and riotous
life
Leaps at its whip, while in the frosted
night

Color flushes sumac, aster and rod,
And paints trees red and ochre. This the
time
For work and play combined, when the
blood leaps
Tingling through the veins, and the spirit
laughs
Tumultuous mirth; or Indian Summer
come,
There is a time for thought and preser-
vation
Of that last peace for dreams in winter
months.

III

When beaten down in mind, and worn
with strife,
The spirit seeks relief . . . the vital spark
Declined, and intellectual vigor dulled . . .
How seldom comes that rest sought for. . .
in vain,
Through purely physical labor. But the
heart,
Cheered by the peace of Nature, probing
down
By blind analysis deeper than the crude
External aspect, finds itself redeemed
From darkness to a light one half its own,
And one half Nature's, when gone from
the scene

Of turmoil, one fares into the natural world,

To reproduce its lesson, while vision grows
With labor, and forgetfulness with vision.
For when the senses whipt by beauty leap

To quicker life, the enriched mind distils
Their meaning, seeking now to represent
In color what poured in with scent and sound.

The work once done, there is an exaltation
Of having nearer reached the springs of life;

Or failing, this poor mind of flitting troubles

Proved vain in solving to the root of Things,
And small, but thus made greater, finds its rest.

IV

Of days when I have so experienced
The truth of life, forgot but reassured,
There are a host; but one day of all these
Stands clearest in my mind, and the most dear.

That dawn, mist veiled the land, and on
the sea

Lay like a shroud, while the slow mounting sun

Rolled on the thick horizon, swollen and huge,

And spread flat shafts of light on the obscured waters.

Then the mists parted, and white gulls were seen

Hovering over driftwood; and the bay, Mirroring sky, slept in the cool dawn. Three hours later, on a rounded hill Close to the summit of the parching slope, Two sunburnt artists in crude paint-daubed smocks

Opened their boxes, took out canvasses, Palettes, brushes and paint, and set to work.

Below, the land was covered by white mist In seas of cloud spreading to the east and north,

And southward black-polled mountains lifted crags.

But on the stubbled field, on gorse and fern,

On wind-bent briars and storm-twisted pines

Clinging by rocks and piled stone walls, the sun

Blazed with unclouded heat, and warmed our hearts,

And struck sweet odors from the mounded slope;

And made rocks gleam, and throw off waves of heat.

Silent we painted, but at length stopt
work

To look down on the mist, and to drink in
The salt air from the sea and fill our lungs
With the keen ichor; and threw back our
smocks,

Till blew a wind cold as the wind that
blows

From a white iceberg in the northern sea,
Chilling us to the bone, who standing there
Watched the mist wreathè and billow in
the blue sky,

And travel inland over fields, and then
In sudden panorama the wide sea
Blue as a sparkling sapphire, and the bay
Broken with waves chopping on rocky
shores

And black, pine-covered islands; white-
sailed ships

Winging to sea with foam at their black
prows,

And all the wonder of the coastal hills.

Then the torn mist swirled round the
barren slope,

And cut off sight.

Shivering, we drew on
Smocks and sweaters, shuffled the paints
in boxes,
Trudged to the road, and bundled things
in haste

Into the waiting car. Then, the drive
home
Down from the hill, over the rolling road,
With wind in our ears, and the clean breath
of fog
Clinging to face and hand; the swift de-
scent,
And the straight level stretch to home,
where logs
Heaped on the hearth blazed, and threw
out heat
That fog ran down in rivulets from our
clothes,
And steamed. . .

V

Should come the time, should come
the time
When we are in our graves, our souls shall
wander
Through the illimitable bounds of heaven,
There, mounting some prominence, may
we look
From the high hills of heaven. . . may
look down
Upon the swirling mist as on that day
We stood facing the wind and gazing down
Upon that misty earth and hidden field
Of water. Then this earth, become so
dear...
As why should it not be? . . . obscured by
mist,

Through sudden rift of cloud and memory
Revealed, as the wind of heaven touches
our spirits,

Stirring remembrance, may whirl unob-
scured

With seas and hills and valleys, through
the gap

Of time, and as that day, show living
wonder

To our remembering eyes that unimpaired
Of vision, shall find the earth's manifesta-
tion

Proved in the glorious fields of Heaven. .
But Oh,

If this should be denied, if Heaven is not,
And spirits linger in this earthly space,
Habiting what they loved, and what in-
spired,

Yet may no hill in heaven but that hill
serve

As memory of Faith, and to our tired
ghosts

Ever that earthly sight return the peace
We knew that day. Even if death be an end,
Unto the last of consciousness we may
keep

That sea and sky in our spirits, and de-
ceived,

Yet, loving life, bear glad hearts to the
grave.

VI

But now is autumn, and the sun is up;
The fields are white with dew, and skies
 are clear;
A colorous world riots, and mirth rings
 out;
Take up your paints, to the meadows, and
 forget to fear!

AFTER TENNIS

Shadows creep across the lawn,
Longer and longer; the warm sun
Swiftly for night and a new dawn
Cools; and now our game is done.
We sit on the lawn and rest, and gaze
Over the fields, watching the sun set,
Silent. Should-be-forgotten days
Surge up again. We cannot forget.

You laugh, "Do you remember?"
It is high noon again, ten years
Ago. A warm September
Wraps us in sadness, and young tears
Come back to us; but still we laugh.
We did not know we were not sad then.
Ten years have passed. Today the chaff
Of Time fills up our eyes again.

The sun sets, and the air turns cold.
We shiver, huddling our wraps around.
"You won, two-love; I'm growing old.
It was not that way once." The ground
Under our feet grows damp. We stay
While knowing better. "Never mind.
We can remember, and still be gay,
Better things than are left to find."

Night falls. "It is far better so.
Things can't be now as they were then.

And yet. . . Time only could show
 The truth." "Forget it all." "Amen."
"So lend me now your steady hand
 To say good-bye, and understand. . ."
"I think these heavy mists will bring
 Us rain; don't you?" "I want to sing."

MARY

Mary would stir all afternoon
Red, bubbling jellies with a spoon
Far, far too big for her, and taste
With critical lips the sweet conserve,
And smile approval with modest reserve. .
None of her jellies went to waste.

And then we children would gather round
Her skirts, and a low laughing sound
Of love would ripple on her lip
As she would hand us creamy bread
With grape or mulberry butter spread,
And give us cambric tea to sip.

But mostly I remember how
She would so finely sew a seam
For hours, until the sun hung low,
When she would stop her work, and dream;
Till we'd laugh in. . . She'd wake, and
then,
Smiling, would take it up again.

THE SPINSTER OF SKINCH LANE

The footfalls that she longs to hear
Upon the pavement, coming near,
Striking the walk with eager beat,
The voice of all joy-bearing feet,
She longs and listens for in vain.
They do not echo down her lane.

Sun-up, and she has had her tea,
Opened the knockered door to see
If early visitors come her way,
As once they did. . . . But the long day
Lulled by the hum of honeying bees,
She works oblivious on her knees.

With trowel and string among her phlox
And roses and pinks and holly-hocks,
She thinks of the flower of her own spring,
And of her wasted blossoming. . . .
Sad is she there, for as she kneels
Softly over her mind there steals

A quiet dream of how some friend
Should call, and, without pitying, end
The grey perspective of her days,
And give her love, and give her praise. . .
Dreams, with the beating of her brain,
“Such things don’t happen down Skinch
Lane.”

When toward sweet night the slow day
draws

Its sunny span, then she will pause,
Then she will view the silent skies,
And silent tears will fill her eyes. . .
Tonight she looks from door to lane,
And smiles, and then grows sad again.

Biting her lip, she turns away.
She does not want to see children play;
But goes reluctant to her door. . .
Skinch Lane shan't see her any more. . .
For hope and life have run their train.

There'll be no mourning on Skinch Lane.

EVENING

(*For M. H. S.*)

This is a quiet evening;
In the green trees the black-birds sing.
They only can tell as should be told,
In the drowsy thoughts their low notes
bring,

Of another evening white and gold,
An unforgettable evening.

I see you in your garden dress,
Your ways of lovable tenderness,
In all the bloom of summer and spring,
That beautiful self in that dainty dress. . .
Again on this kindred evening,
Your unforgettable loveliness.

The eyes tear-lashed, the lips that sing
In the happiness of evening,
And the touch of twilight on your hair,
Like sadness a delicate thought may
bring
Of the golden warmth of twilit air,
Of an unforgettable evening.

RELIEF

It is dusk, and after the day's heat
 The quiet cool of evening
Comes to me as the soft and sweet
 Touch of a calm hand. I sing
With thankful heart up to the skies
 Where clouds lit with the sulphurous
 light
Of sunset touch my tired eyes
 With gladness, and a breath of night
Born of the early stars wings down
 To lift me up in its crisp fold.
My heart leaps as the lights of town
 Break out into the dark and cold.

TOSCA, ACT III

The prison glooms upon the city's sleep
When life is at its lowest, and the limbs
Of lovers and of the old
Are motionless, and in the dawn lie cold.
Now eastern daylight draws night's veil
and dims

The sombre sky and the stars, and sun-
beams steep
The wandering clouds and sleepy sky with
gold,
And bless the palace domes.
Slowly over the sleeping city comes
The chime of a distant bell.

The flag that has waved drowsily
Through the dark hours, now made visible
Upon the bastion, still waves drowsily,
And stirs in the dawn wind.

O violins, cease your crying,
And viol, flute, bassoon,
Cease from your moan!
Yet not of him who shall be lying
Dead with a bullet in his heart do I mind,
Nor of his lover who bids him take hope,
and sees him dead, and dies. . .

But for my sake, O violins,
And viol, flute, bassoon,
Cease from your moan,
And still your cry!

WINTER

(*To S. B. J.*)

The snow is heavy on the town,
Swept from heaven down by the wind;
And only the grey flakes and the brown
Of trees are in the sky. I find
No comfort in these things; I fear
The passing of long year on year;
I dread the cracking of winter tempests
Over my heart grown cold and drear.

Yet I would plod against the beat
Of sleet and storm if I might gain
Rest by your fireside, and the sweet
Hope in my heart, with loss of pain
And darkness from my mind, by light
Struck from your mind, flamingly
white. . .

The fire is dead; even your window dark,
And snow grows heavier through the
night.

MARCH

The rain falls dismally on the ground,
At night the creeping mists uprise
From the dank earth where the trees
 stand
Dripping and cold. The sick heart cries
For sunlight, as the slow day breaks
Unseen over the eastern seas;
And the heart from sullen dreaming wakes,
But hears only the rain drip from the trees.

NECESSITY

I do not ask that night
Give me winged sleep that I
Drooped on its pinions fly
From dusk to a dream light,

Nor of cold vision to see
Things beyond earth, if they
Make dark my earthly way
By their eternity;

But ask heart's peace to live
In beauty of mortal things,
Gaining for my soul wings,
Yet not as fugitive.

For there is mind's relief
In love, and food, and dress;
There, too, forgetfulness,
And faith, in grief.

FIRESIDE

Dear things I love, dear quiet things,
Like people that I love, and know. . .
I had forgot that night-time brings
Their realness home. The fire is low,
And red and flickering flames now dart
Quickly to die, and through the gloom
Quiver the burning lights. My heart
Is sad with beauty in the gloom.

Brass candle-stick, gray pewter mug. . .
How lovingly the firelight glows
On these, on ceiling, wall, and rug,
On wing-back chair and colored rows
Of books. . . How silent is their speech,
And grave the happiness they lend. . .
They are of me, and I of each
Of them, in bondage without end.

AFTER GOLF

Now it is evening, and I plod
Home from the links. The weighted bag
Presses my feet to ground, and I
Am tired; muscle and spirit lag.
All afternoon the quiet warmth
Wrapped me around, and I would play
The game without heart, and think most
On autumn, and on this still day.

Homeward I plod, but I still see
The greens bright in the September mist,
And the immortals laughing there.
The sun is set, and the sky is kist
With light; but all the woods are dry
And brown in the brittle fields. Now close
Of day and summer knock. I hear
The distant, lonely cawing of crows.

SYMPHONY

Evening comes, and shadows drift
In long lines on the heavy grass;
And with the wind pass and repass
Quiveringly. Beneath the trees,
Over the flowers they fall and lift.
The world breathes out its symphonies.

The air is golden and rich with bloom
Of myriad flowers. Hushed is the sweet
Twittering of wrens, and the swift beat
Of whirring grackles from the sky.
The hanging sun drops, and the gloom
Deepens; the trees tremble and sigh.

Now it is dark; the trees are still;
And restless grackles take breath from
flight;
The ground breathes as cover of night
Muffles half of the world's girth;
Mute in the hush we stand until
We feel the heave of the turning Earth.

NORDMAN FIRS

I have come back to you, my trees, at last,
After insatiate wanderings,
To hear the soothings South Wind in your
boughs;
And my heart sings.

I have found rest where you strive
Heavenward,
Roots in the sweet ground;
Rest in your stately bending and soft
Long boughs' shuffle and sound.

Far off where the dim lawn sweeps to the
East,
In woods hidden from sight,
The frogs are peeping in the silence and
hush and dream
Of the deep night.

Beyond the water, lights of the city sear
Gold arcs on the moving sky;
But all the stirring and heaving of the
heart
Is in your melody.

I have come back at last, my seven
guardians,
Back to the old place,

To the cool South Wind that soughs and
 sighs in your boughs,
And breathes on my face.

Limbs compass-pointed, prone on the dear
 grass,
Face-up to stars I lie;
I see your height sweep upward from the
 ground,
Crests lost in the night sky.

II

A JUNE WALK IN PRINCETON
(*For T. S.*)

I

Winter has come upon us; let me sing
Of aught to give us strength through the
most drear
And dismal months of the revolving year,
Preferring one short hour that yet may
bring
Refreshment to tired hearts, to which we
cling
As bond of faith, of friendship, and the
clear
Knowledge that makes this wintry world
appear
More kind in purpose, as was last Spring.

Therefore, I take a subject that may please
None but myself. . . if you, then better
so. . .
Nothing that teaches others, nor thought
to ease
Pain of their soul. I offer you what
strives
Neither to mend nor influence other lives,
Yet tells in part how gained we much we
know.

II

So let them heed if they would knowledge share,
The simple means of making such vast gain,
Knowledge not won through tumult nor through pain,
But peace comes sweetly in the midst of care;
And let them sneer and snicker if they bear
Aught of contempt or doubt of what is plain,
Who find the answer neither in sun nor rain
Unto a lonely world's unrisen prayer.

For they, no doubt, have done as we before,
And, if it's true, these lines can give them naught
Who think that sensuous Nature is no more
Than of itself. But, as I sing, to you
From one such teeming hour's swift review
Will spring the flower of the wisest thought.

III

Warm was the evening, and the stuffy air
In the room grew burdensome, and the
dim care
That irked my thought grew stifling as the
heat
Of early summer. For outside was the
sweet
Drowsy spell of flowers' scent, the
shadows
Laying their silence on the town, and
meadows
Not far away filled with red Columbine
And daisies, and the green woods with
Celandine;
Bloomed late spring beauties and anemones
Where lushest grew the budded shrubs and
trees,
The maples weighted down and throwing
shade
That only by maples in young June is made.
In neighboring gardens lilacs were in
bloom,
Wygelia and first roses, so the room
Was filled with the odor of spring, and yet
was dull,
Because, outside, things were more
beautiful.

There, as I sickened, in the quiet street
I heard, slowly approaching, the tread of
feet

On the warm pavement; presently, a voice
Beneath my window made my heart
rejoice;

Books thrown away, I shuffled down the
stair

And sauntered out into the mellow air.
We walked, breathing the warmth, my
friend and I,

Westward along the highroad, watched
the sky

Flush like a misted opal, and the red sun
Roll in the west now the hot day was done.
Once free of the town, we left the cobbled
road,

And over field and bright-flowered meadow
strode,

Into the sunset, on to a quiet lake
Where elm and willow and shivering poplar
make

Placid reflection in the waters. There
We lingered, cooled ourselves and felt the
air

Moist and refreshing after the warm day,
And then we yawned, and rose, and went
away

From low-lands into hills, and on a hill

Where all the air seemed sweeter and more
still

Again we tarried where the lingering sun
Shone gold. But all the valley had begun
To be obscured in shadows, and the herds
Whose lowing blended with the song of
birds,

Were loving the cool mist upon their
flanks,

And, in their bovine manner, giving thanks.
Now both of us, being poets, had brought
a book

Of modern verse, yet never cared to look
On modern song when sparrow and thrush
were singing

Far truer music, and the deep shadows
bringing

Cold purple glows of evening on the green
Where now the mottled cattle were but
half seen.

Still in the lingering light we loitered there
Nor spoke, but, silent, stayed, as if in
prayer,

To watching the flaming in the mellow
west,

To think and wonder, and to learn, and
rest.

Then, when the long slow shadows climbed
the hill

We laughed, and rose, and wandered back
in the still
Light of the trembling sky, back to the
town
And came again to lawns so neatly mown
They seemed like velvet where the flashing
dew
Of sprinklers lay upon them till their hue
Was emerald, and in broad flower-beds
Petunias and white lilies drooped tired
heads,
Syringa and mock orange made the air
Heavy with a dull perfume, and the pear
And bridal-wreath weighed racemes to the
moist ground
In silence. And there only was the sound
Of our own feet upon the dewy road.
Till a last vireo sang and took the load
Of sensuous beauty from our souls. It
sang
Only a moment, yet the horizon rang
Its echo back to our hearts, that purer
notes
Might wander from our pens and from our
throats.

We turned the shadowy corner, and heard
swell
Upon the air chimes of the chapel bell;
And then we mounted to my room to rest
Until the last light faded from the west;

But when the dark came down, and the
starlight,
We walked again, and breathed the living
night.

IV

Let me stop here. In quiet June we
went

And watched the slow close of a summer's
day

Until the warm west glimmered and paled
gray,

And to the heated earth cool night was
sent.

That night, to us half-fathoming what it
meant,

Half-consciously, perhaps, shall equal
weigh

In quiet grace of Heaven. But I shall say

No more, for now my gladder song is
spent.

Dear friend, although our hearts shall not
forget

Yet may this record tell when the year has
drawn

To an end, one hour of other suns long set.

June comes the same and goes, and there
shall stay

But this my bond to you who go your way,
Gladly, and with fresh hope, into your
dawn.

GOING TO EAT

(*For T. S.*)

As we went striding down the street
With light hearts and light feet
Bent on something or other to eat,

The wind whistled and made moan,
And lights were dim in the college town
Where only we went striding down

The midnight walk. And God! how cold. . .
But youth had made us gay and bold,
We thought it beautiful to grow old. . .

Poets and friends, together at night,
When wind frosted and laid a blight
Of dust on the land, and blinded our sight.

The leaves rattled, whipt, and flew by;
Two sycamores shivered stark and high,
And then bowed down like ghosts in the
sky.

The stars shone out. We were young and
proud.
Suddenly then there came a crowd
Of spirits winging. We laughed out loud!

SPRING NIGHT

I

We talked of trivial matters, he
And I; but ah! the night was warm
And wet, and full of spring and storm
That couched on the wide-shadowed lea;
But every tree
Set from the wood was deep, deep red
Inverted in the misted road.
We rested. Hot rain fell. We strode
Back to hot rooms. The night was bled,
And our words hung dead.

II

Here on these steps, in wan moonlight,
Let us think;
Let us breathe the rich quietude of night,
And think.

III

And Nature, free us from small thought!
And Spring,
Fill us with all rich beauty! Here, tonight,
Let the full notes of that ecstatic bird
Singing in the dark alders bring us life.

THE STUDENT RE-ENTERS HIS ROOM

Night has come to the earth;
It is late.

The ash is white on the hearth,
And the coal in the grate.

Four hours ago — But now
It is cold.

Even your dream is burnt low,
And the flame is old.

Go, go to sleep, and forget;
Till the laughter turned tears
Shall be sweeter and warmer yet
Through all the years.

THE STUDENT LOOKS FROM HIS WINDOW LATE AT NIGHT

The night is cold, and white stars gleam
Upon the tinkling grass and trees;
In the unlighted dormitories
The men have gone to rest.
There is a silence sounding deep
As the Earth turns and youth takes sleep.

This is a hard life, but we have done
Our best; and all's to do again
Tomorrow in the sun or rain,
And we can do no more,
Fooling ourselves and the world, than
plan,
And strive each one to be the man

He is not nor shall be. But O,
God bless us all, poor fools; I pray
That we may bravely meet the day,
Unflinching in the dawn,
And at the hour of day's break
The bright sun warm us as we wake. . .

I have turned out the last pale light;
Goodnight.

TWENTY-ONE

Now he's twenty-one,
O, there will be great merry-making;
For he has gone
Through twenty-one years without his
heart's breaking.

And the twenty-one years
Were a long time in going;
Best let him laugh till his hairs
Turn gray, fall out, and then stop
growing.

Well? One thing's done;
Until life's ended it's not so fleeting.
But here's to him; he's twenty-one;
And his heart will break soon, but not
stop beating.

PERSPECTIVE

When the late sun is falling low
Above the hills, and the smooth hush
Of a spring evening spreads, I go
Sometimes into the fields and bush
To feel the stillness. There,
With none to share
The beauty of the scene I rest,
And breathe the cool, sweet, earthy
smells
Of country, or on some hill-crest
Lying, I hear dulled the distant bells
Summoning men to vespers. I
Motionless lie,
And do not care for anything
That calls for thought. . . my studies,
books,
The voice of loud tongued bells that ring
To class. . . but for some seat that
looks,
Some rounded knoll or hill-side, down
Upon the town,
Where the tall towers rise, and throw
Long shadows on street, walk, and
green,
And ever students come and go
Across that ever peaceful scene,
Oft on some game or pleasure bent,
Now day is spent,

Or if work lingers, "letting slide"
Till morning. This, the Princeton way
In June; on this green country-side
Life ebbs at the warm close of day,
As, from a distance, still,
Upon my hill,
I view it all, and feel its spell
Come over me, and love its peace;
And hear the distant chapel bell
Speak of a past that shall not cease
To grow. Now twilight is less bright.
Now it is night.

PEACE OF NIGHT

Calm night flows down on cote and wold
And hill with the slow, muffled tune
Of deepening silence half unrolled
Through the long lingering eves of June;

And, in the quiet streets where oft
I stroll, in this still country town,
I feel the night pulsating soft,
But full of peace as it pours down.

MOONRISE

Silent, the moon behind the feathery trees
Rises. The lake, quiet as memories,
Stirs not. The stars are dimmed.
Through the unruffled air and over the
still waters
Comes song of tree-toads hymned.

We are so silent now, that we can hear
The stirring of grasses in the light lap of
air;
So quiet that, taking heart, a frog
Croaks out his song at our feet, and in the
silence,
We can hear the rot tick in a floating log.

ON LEAVING A ROOM I HAVE
OCCUPIED FOR A YEAR

(To C. P.)

The rugs are up, the curtains down, the
chair
Crated and tagged, and papers strew the
floor;
The trunks are packed, and the whole
room is bare
But for the dust and wrappings; the shut
door
Entombs the desolation. All my books
Are taken from the shelves, and boxed,
and sent. . .
Now the landlady raps, and someone looks
Over *our* room, and talks of terms and
rent.
But next year, at this time, he too will go,
Yet leave part of himself; new men will
stare
At the hushed room, live in it, and not
know
That there are others. . . dead men. . .
living there.
Not till the old house falls, will flee the
hosts
Of one time young, but ever youthful
ghosts.

THE SEA LIES EAST OF PRINCETON

The sea lies east of Princeton. Let me
look
Out on the morning landscape as a book
Of vision. Let me be.
Mock not, for I look eastward to the sea.
I look away
From things less spiritual to the dawn;
Over the dew-wet lawn,
Far, far away,
Beyond the buildings, over the sunlit
plain
To the articulate main;
On to the gold horizon; fix my eye
On the illimitable sky!
O Princeton, let me be;
I read my visions eastward in the sea!

METRONOMES

Let us go find metronomes:
Perhaps the finding will give birth
To order and rhythm upon the Earth. . .
Tick, tock, tick, tock,
Tick, tock, time to eat,
Tick, tock, time for bed,
Tick, tock, tick, tock,
Tick, Jim's married, they say,
Tock, Jack died today,
Tick, tock, tick, tock,
Tick, find metronomes,
Let us go find metronomes. . .
“But what becomes of all our laughter,
What of our love, and our freedom of
song?” . . .
Tick, tock, tick, tock,
Order and rhythm, order and rhythm. . .
Tick, tock, tick. . .

AFTER CLOSING

I don't know why I stayed. . . To feel
The turn of some mysterious wheel
Of life; hear in my ears what rung
Like echoes of a song just sung. . .

I lingered when the rest had gone;
I viewed the empty campus lawn;
And saw in every blade of grass
The mark, the bruise of feet that pass.

III

TO A WOMAN WHO HAS GAINED PEACE

I did not know you, but I think your
youth
Could not have been more beautiful than
the age
That proves you gracious, who have read
the truth,
And read it to your image. The turned
page
Is turned for kinder vision, and your eyes
Are not less bright for having filled with
tears.
Now in your heart the peace of wisdom
lies
Where love and sorrow lay so many
years.

I worship you, would have worshipped you
then
With passionate love, but not as now, a
queen
Who walks with stately quiet to make men
Bow to the good in women. But what
you have seen
I can but vaguely ponder. . . Things that
I
May love, and yet not know, until I
die?

SEA BRUME

The moon is rising cold and blear,
 Quiet as only the moon can be,
And the low soughing in the weir
 In the slow motions of the sea,
And the smooth flow of rising tide
 Mounting with fateful certainty,
Make the waves' lap at the wharf-side
 Break the monotony. No sound
Other than theirs ruffles the wide
 Moon-spilt silence wrapping us round.

Over the dank brume from the ground
 Infinite is the mist-blown sky,
Silence in which a breath is drowned,
 That the warm breathers, you and I
Sop till our souls are of all space
 And time eternal, and the sigh
Of the sea, the sorrow of the place
 Under the saturate still of night,
Blend in the shadow of your face,
 Grown old and wise in the half light.

Lost in the deep spell of night
 And the unceasing wash of air,
Is the insidious rot, the blight
 Under the surface; soul's despair
Waxed with the tide's flow and the seep
 Of waves risen in the sedge, till prayer
Grows numb with silence and a deep

Realization of flesh. Unshoaled
Now are the high waters, and creep
Seaward with scums like hopes grown
old.

Now the dark air turns shivering cold,
It shudders through us, and we see
Only the universal mould,
Night, and the world's necessity.
Lend me the quiet of your eyes,
Let fall your dark hair over me.
Night's and the ocean's mysteries
Blend in your flesh. And now my quest
Is peace, and even as hope dies,
Let me forget in your arms, and rest.

ECSTASY

Wind like keen steel cuts the fogged air,
And lashes flecks of spray
To javelin whips, till the blare
Like rattle of trumpets hits my ear,
Till the incessant motion and sway,
The battering of waves and the drear
Dreadfulness and monotony
And unrest of the sea
Bruise me so meadows with mild breeze
Wandering over them, and hills
Sunny-flowered with the bland bees'
Hum insistent through the air,
Or the wide, simmering sky that fills
With clouds bosomed on the fields' glare,
And even the hushed rustle of trees
Can lend no ease
More permanent than minute's rest
That is no rest; for the bell
Buoyed at sea clangs from the wave's
crest
And jangles its call tirelessly.
And I shall ride the swell
Of mounting waves till the crude sea
Of bitterness be ecstasy
To me.

THE POET CALLS HIS LOVE TO THE MOUNTAINS

Come up to the high mountains, love,
where I
See clearer to the stars, and may look
down
Upon the rounded Earth; come high, come
high,
To where the luminous heavens spread
unknown.
Oft to the valley from the misted hills
I'd have you go, down to the moving
sea,
But now, my love, the enchanted spirit
wills
Stronger, to lift with thin-pitched
melody
To frozen summits loftier than the mount
Where oft I pay you court in the low
land,
That hearing, love has no short hours to
count. . .
But come to me; I cannot reach you my
hand.

HE ADVISES HIS LOVE .

Seek not thy god in flesh, for he will die. . .
When god is dead, what hope has one of
faith? . . .

Or love will cease. . . And one must
ceaselessly

Love god, unto the emptiness of death. . .
Look inward to thyself. What not in thee
Is there in him? Thou changest. He will
change. . .

Or toward some intellectual deity
Then let the free, impetuous spirit range.

Seek elsewhere. Thou may'st think death
cannot kill

This wonder, though thou forcest love
grown small

And petulant in action. . . There is still
The sure calamity, worst, worst of all,
When the unchanging changes. . . be it
not

That dread defection be so soon forgot.

BROKEN CHORDS

Alone; and you have gone, while through
the room

Sifts mellow sunlight in long bars of red,
Limning the window, deepening the gloom
Of solitude till even that light is dead,
And through the window stares a ghastly
sky

Of fiery smalt, as silent on my couch I lie
Watching arc lamps turn bright along the
street,

Flicker, and cast black shadows on the
wall. . .

I rise, and by the window take my seat,
And strain toward clearer thought.

Some music hall

Across the way makes ready for a dance,
And hearing this, I fall into a nightmared
trance;

But presently thin music plays and sifts
Into my room in dim discordant strains.

Now silence; now a weak-voiced viol lifts
Dry, plaintive notes like quick, half-
stifled pains,

To strike and tear nerve-fibres and taut
chords

Of thought, till elfin phantoms troop in
eerie hordes,

Dressed in gray memories, vermillion
dreams,

Black, blue, green, yellow twitchings of
unrest. . .

But still the muffled music hums, drums,
streams

Like thin-mouthed shudders of a soul
unblest.

Cutting like sleet, or like white fire they
burn,

Torturing, screaming: Gone, gone past all
return!

Wraiths of sad, far-off dances; on the
beach

Long mornings, idly bantering in the sun;
Water, sparkling ripples, and the reach

Of listening promontories. One by one
Such little scenes pour themselves out, and
grind

Each other into dust, in dust whirl from
my mind.

And then, somehow, the music is mere
sound,

Void of all meaning. Just another night
Of dullness comes to go its dreary round;

But suddenly I turn full on the light
To clear the room of thought and quick
regret,

And be a lantern for a heart whose sun has
set.

HE CLOSES HIS HEART

Sink beauty to the earth, and die in pain
After an hour's blooming, do not weep,
Grieve not; think other beauty springs
again,
That the dead bloom was troublesome to
keep;
For it was constant care to the loving hand,
And tiring worry to the brooding eye,
Grief in life to the fearful mind that
planned
To ward Death from a beauty doomed to
die.

Grieve not, grieve not! The heart is free
again.
Let soar the wandering mind through
thoughtful space.
Make love less earthy, though less dear,
and then
Forget. Grieve not o'er a forgotten
face.
And that it stay forgot, use all thy wit,
Close fast thy heart; and O, speak not
of it!

HE FINDS RELIEF IN LIFE

When I am numb with sorrow and with
 night
And the immeasurable distance of the stars
That prick the malarial sky; when petty
 wars
And strifes distend my dreams and blear
 my sight. . .
When everything is wrong, and nothing
 right,
And moon and sun indifferent are to Earth,
Till it seems Man's best destiny from
 birth
To a last death be one of swift delight. . .
I throw myself on life, and grieving gain
Moments relief in life, and purge my
 dreams
In living, and believe, and still my cry
Until my senses sing, while joy and pain
And rich contentment fill me, till it seems
I'd see white angels winging from the sky.

HE APPEALS TO NIGHT

Night, Night, mild time of rest and
sweetened sleep,
Be kind to me who have so loved the
dawn,
And seen the sun loom up the golden steep
And blaze into meridian. It has drawn
The sap from me, and made the world
turn dust
That catches evening's meagre gold and
red
Too late; the land is russet and black rust,
The beauty the sad beauty of the dead.

Be kind to me, Night; give me lengthened
rest,
With dream, but not of feverous heat
and noon,
Nor of the treasure sinking in the West;
But let the luminous quiet of the moon
Pour down upon me sleep, that I may rise
And meet the morning sun with shining
eyes.

HE SEEKS OTHER LANDS .

You had not much to offer, and I go
To distant seas and hills with a glad heart,
Seeking that rest and happiness I know
Lies somewhere. God is good. There
is some part
Of this Earth I may find it, be it high
On starlit peaks above the spreading
plain,
Open to wind and the down-pressing sky,
Or on the wide sea. Now through every
vein
I feel the pulse leap to the eager quest;
I leave you on the morrow. . . But this
sunset
You show me beauty until now unguessed.
There is a spell of peace, and I forget
Drab days, and must remember you for
this. . .
For I have found rest in a parting kiss.

HE FINDS PEACE AT DAWN

All night I listened to the monody
And restless plaint and cry of the marsh
brine;
The ripples' creak through the weeds in a
fine
Grievous lament of twanging agony;
Till the far sobbing of the distant sea,
Of cold breakers churning their long, salt
line
On the hard shore hushed the unquiet
whine
Of ripples, and wrapped a deep sea-sleep
upon me.

But I awake, strangely early, and the sun
Mellow as morning, warms the fresh-
springing breeze,
And spreads over the broad grasses of the
dun
Sea meads; on the marsh beach, a calm
white light,
And on the waters; and all so still, and
bright. . .
Dear God! the very peace, the very peace.

COLD STARS

I have writhed in the festering heat
Of noon; I have felt my mind
Reel with the southern wind,
And drops of passionate sweat
Dry on my brow.

But now,
I have seen the distorting light
Fade, and white stars shine out;
I have felt my fever's rout,
I have breathed the clean air of night.

THE STORM

The sky lowers;
It showers;
Raindrops in big plashes fall;
Dark is the room, dark is the hall.
Draperies stir; breezes spring
Soft as the feather of an owlet's wing,
Rest on my cheek, and go.
Tick, tock,
Ticks the clock;
Slow, slow, slow.

The door opens; a stranger there
Stands silent on the dusty stair;
Black, and then dead white his hair. . .
And the lightning flashes. He is not there.

And the wind blows the door shut,
And the thunder rumbles in;
And then there is only a thin
Murmur of rain, and the wind dies out,
And the sun cracks the clouds like a
shout. . .
Yet there's nothing to shout about.

THE LOCKED DOOR

The door is locked, and that is all

There is to say about it.

And as for what's inside the room,

I'll have to go without it.

The door is locked, and that is all

There is to say about it.

But if I know what's in the room,

Why, I keep still about it.

And so, for knowing what it is,

You'll have to go without it.

The door is locked, and that is all

There is to say about it.

THE CRYSTAL BALLROOM

The touch of irony is light on all of us
tonight,
Four hundred roses blooming in an acreage
of blight;
Envied, hated, cursed? Who cares?
We've got our liquor stored;
We are the god-like millionaires, and like
the gods are bored!

TO LYDIA

I do not love you if in play
I pledge my love, for your life's way
And mine differ as night and day.

But when my dream is shard, the thought
Of you, and happiness you have brought
Into my life, is dearly sought.

You ease the mind of one who prays
For you, and for your delicate ways,
The loveliness that stays, and stays.

Nor would I have your spirit know
Years' hardening, but pray that it go
Lightly through the adagio,

And move as with your bodily grace
You tread this strange and motley place
With youth upon your lifted face,

And mien nor childish nor unwise
Of unaccounted laughter and sighs
And joy and sorrow in your eyes.

I love the light unwittingly shed
By the chaste poise of your proud head.
I sorrow that your mind is dead.

TWO SONNETS

I

You are as shallow as a meadow stream
Pellucid in the sun, that he will find
Who chances near, more limpid than a
dream

Where mist is not, nor cloud, nor any wind.

When sun is shining, and the dragon flies
Glimmer above it where light grasses sway
On the white surface, it is blue as skies
And warm as summer on an August day.

But when clouds gather, and the heating
sun

Is hidden, and quick, sudden gusts of
storm

Whip up a tiny whirlpool where was none,
The water is made cold that was so warm.

Then, when the lightening sun has chased
the rain,

The stream flows clear, and smooth, and
warm again.

II

But let no man build cities on its brink,
Nor dam its flood to make it broad and
deep;

It will not fill the dam, nor sweeter drink
Will offer, nor its pristine clearness keep.

Small stream, let it flow idly to the sea
Through pleasant banks where lovers
come to lie,
And hear its crisp and shallow melody,
Or children play, or poets such as I

Gain mind's refreshment in its warm, still
flow,
And watch its ripples in the sunrays gleam,
Or like Narcissus by a pool bend low
To see their likeness shadowed in the
stream.

He who shall gaze in it will find more fair
The meaning of his plainness imaged there.

ON SEEING SOME INLAND ROSES

The inland roses have not
 the fragrance of those by the sea,
The roses convolvulus twined
 that cling to the spray sown shore;
They have not the crimson blood,
 and their pallor is nothing to me
Who am sick of their faint breath,
 and have loved the others before.

They have not the ecstatic flush
 that comes of salt air and the wild
Beating of waves at their roots;
 they are satiate with the dew
Of soft dawn on their petals;
 they are pure and undefiled;
But they lack the sea-bred strength,
 and never will have the hue

Rich and clear and ringing
 of their sea sisters, and hue of life
Born of the struggle of weather and wind
 and bitter soil and the sea,
The brave and beautiful spirit
 sprung from victorious strife;
I have loved their sturdier sisters,
 and these are nothing to me.

THE NEXT MEETING

I wonder, should we meet again,
If you would smile upon me then,
Or if you'd show averted eyes. . .
Say, merely something in your guise
To flagellate and throw me down. . .
A subtle sneer, a petty frown. . .
Or would you only laugh and jeer
At things that happened yesteryear?

I think perhaps you'd go all white,
And then all crimson, at my sight,
And slip into some handy store
So I'd not see you any more.
I'd look away; perhaps regret
The things you'd wish me to forget,
And sing the postlude of romance
Started and ended at a dance.

HE FINDS HOPE IN THE COSMIC LAW

Now is the closing of the year; but there
comes spring;
It is the night, but after night comes dawn;
One moment passes, that new moments
bring
New worlds when this is gone.

THE LAST TRAIN

I shall go out at night,
And leave the heated room
Dull in the half gloom
Of guttering candle-light,
Nor longer shall I stay
Lest lingering I see
The candles die away,
The last wine poured for me;
Into the night I'll glide
From the dim table-side
And the tired talkers there,
Into the snow-sweet air.

Then once the threshold passed,
Free of the waning mirth,
On the cold, wintry earth
I'll walk half glad at last;
Half gladly I shall go,
Half sadly, without sound,
Over the fallen snow
And on the frozen ground;
Sad to think and to long
For the ring of a dead song;
Glad love left its mark
To friend me through the dark.

The corner I shall make,
And hurry down the street,

But no one shall I meet
Thereon to still the ache
Of heart's deep loneliness
And quiet of the night,
To quell the sudden press
Of happiness dreamt in light
Fallen from candles tall
To shadow the long hall,
And the mirth and laughter ringing
Upon the walls, and the singing

Of friends. I'll think, and mourn,
And shuffle on with weight
Of burdens grown of late
Too heavy; I shall turn
Down the long sloping lane,
With tread nor quick, nor slow.
I have gone to the last train
Before, as I shall go,
And heard as I went down
A bell ring over the town,
Incessantly beat the air,
To make a world despair;

Heart-beat on bell-beat; long
Inharmonious notes
Forced from the iron throats
To wail phantasmal song.
Down to the train I have gone,

Silent and tired, with eyes
Searching for things once known
Now hidden by dark skies.
When only snow has gleamed
In the night whose falling seemed
To bring peace on the land,
But pain to understand.

On the dim platform I
Have waited and watched the snow
Flicker and fall in the glow
Of the station lamp nearby;
And stood, and seen the rails
Shine in the dark and gleam,
And heard the far-off wails
And intermittent scream
Of engines, and the peals
Of a bell with rumble of wheels
And groan of ties. The glare
Sudden on snow-thick air

Bursts with a rush of wind
And roar of iron; and then,
The empty tracks again,
And the breath of the wet wind;
Till through the blinding night
Long clanking cars are drawn
Slowly from hills of moonlight
To seabords of white dawn;

And when they too have passed
Suddenly comes the last
Train out of the West;
And what is last is best.

I mount the steps and throw
My weight on the heavy door,
And in the corridor
I choose a chair; and know
Many a time the light
Too dim for reading there,
And so gaze at the night
Outside and the snow's glare
On field and house and tree
Passing too soon to be
More than a shape in the gloom,
A gleam in the cold brume.

And barely do I keep
From moaning; and I look
Back to the blurred book,
And at travellers asleep,
Until I too must doze,
And only dimly wake
To see the glimmering rows
Of city houses break
The dark, as the train goes
Swaying on, nor slows,
But swings over the fen,
And gathers speed; and then

Into the dark well
The cars roar, and sweep
With clatter and clank through the deep
Throat; and the lorn bell
Rings in the thick black,
Beneath the river-bed,
Until the eardrums crack
And grow numb. Someone has said
A word or two, and some
Arise, knowing they've come
To the end, rub eyes and yawn. . .
Slowly, the journey done,

The cars jog on the rail,
Lights flash, and the brakes grind;
Then the press out, to find
The smell of mist, and the pale
Luminous haze of air,
The stairs, the many feet
Trampling into the bare
High hall, and the known, sweet
Touch of hand or a kiss. . .
I know it will be like this,
All gladness and relief
From cankerous heart's grief. . .

I shall go out at night,
And leave the heated room
Dull in the half gloom
Of guttering candle-light;

Nor longer shall I stay,
Lest lingering, I see
The candles die away,
The last wine poured for me.
Into the night I'll glide
From the dim table-side,
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